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FACT SHEET

Soil and Water Conservation Assistance Program

The Soil and Water Conservation Assistance Program is a voluntary effort for farmers and ranchers that provides cost share and incentive payments to address threats to soil, water and related natural resources, including grazing land, wetland and wildlife habitat; comply with Federal and State environmental laws; and make beneficial, cost-effective changes to cropping systems, grazing management, manure, nutrient, pest, or irrigation management, land uses, or other measures needed to conserve and improve soil, water and related natural resources.

Scope

SWCA is available nationwide, but only in areas not designated under section 1230(c) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3830(c)).

These are areas outside the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) designated priority areas, Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) priority areas, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) national priority areas.

SWCA will help address the current unfunded backlog of conservation applications and other Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation program requests.

Funding

SWCA is budgeted at \$20 million for fiscal year 2001. Funds are distributed to the states using an allocation formula which is based on 29 environmental factors which characterize the resources of the state, and consideration of those areas of the state that are outside of EQIP priority areas, WRP priority areas, and CRP national priority areas.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must own or control the land and agree to implement specific eligible conservation practices.

Specifics

The NRCS state conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, will determine eligible practices, using a locally-led process.

Cost-shared practices shall be maintained for the life of the practice.

There will be a continuous signup, with periodic ranking cutoff dates as determined by the state conservationist in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

The state conservationist, with input from the State Technical Committee, will rank and select applications for funding.

There will be a five- to 10-year contract period. The maximum total payment per participant for SWCA shall not exceed \$50,000.

The federal share will be 75 percent of the cost of an eligible practice, based on the percent of actual cost, percent of actual cost with not-to-exceed limits and flat rates or average costs. Participants will be paid based upon certification of completion of the approved practice.

In-Kind Contributions

Producers may contribute to the cost of a practice through in-kind sources. Eligible in-kind contributions may include: personal labor, use of personal equipment, donated labor or materials, and on-hand or approved used materials.

Program Responsibility

NRCS is the agency designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as being responsible for program management and leadership for SWCA.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will disburse the cost share and incentive payments to the participants. FSA provides facilities on behalf of CCC to make program payments to participants.

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